

Anza Expedition of 1776



Stopped by Impenetrable Marshes

The Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition of 1775–1776 traveled with 240 settlers, soldiers, and others 1,800 miles from Sonora, Mexico to Monterey, California. Anza then traveled with a much smaller group to San Francisco and the East Bay to discover the origins of the water of both San Francisco Bay and the Central Valley, and to find a route eastward to the Sierra Nevada Mountains. On April 4, 1776, the explorers journeyed very close to this area, but they had to turn south back to Monterey due to the impenetrable marshes and waterways to the east in the Delta.

Future generations after Anza also found the Delta wetlands a hindrance to progress. They “fixed” that problem by diverting most of its water for use elsewhere, drying out the land for farming and development. As the land in front of you is restored back to marshland in the future, perhaps it will look similar to what Anza saw in 1776.



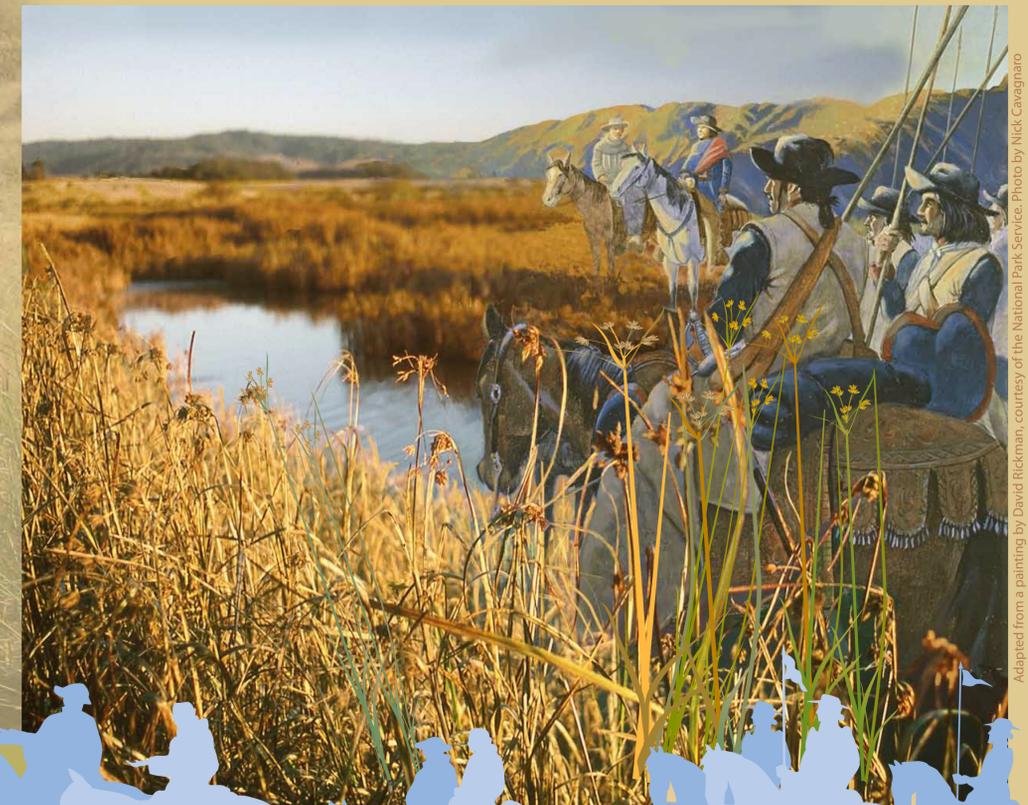
Drawing by Barbara Downs, courtesy of EBRPD

Since Anza's time, over 95% of California's wetlands have been destroyed. Only recently have people realized the true importance of wetlands for wildlife, flood control, and pollution filtration.

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Central Valley: Was it a Lake, River, or Marsh?

Near this site on April 3, 1776, Father Pedro Font “confirmed” in his diary that the Central Valley was a lake. We now know that it was a complex mosaic of rivers and marshes rich with life that flooded with winter rains and spring snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada Mountains.



Adapted from a painting by David Rickman, courtesy of the National Park Service. Photo by Nick Cavagnaro



Welcome to the homeland of the Julpun, a Bay Miwok-speaking tribe.



Dates and stories taken from the diaries of Anza and Font, courtesy of the Center for Advanced Technology in Education, University of Oregon, www.anza.uoregon.edu.